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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION N
10/687,876	10/20/2003	Norman Duke	3918-0157P	2081
2292	7590	10/05/2004	EXAMINER	
BIRCH STEWART KOLASCH & BIRCH PO BOX 747 FALLS CHURCH, VA 22040-0747			ELKINS, GARY E	
			ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
			3727	
DATE MAILED: 10/05/2004				

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/687,876

Applicant(s)

DUKE ET AL.

Examiner

Gary E. Elkins

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☐ Responsive to communication(s) filed on ____.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-16 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) ____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) ____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-16 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) ____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) ____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☒ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on 20 October 2003 is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☒ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☒ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☒ None of:
1. ☒ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. ____.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date ____.
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. ____.
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: ____.

DETAILED ACTION

Specification

1. The disclosure is objected to because of the following informalities: the claim for foreign priority in the first sentence of the specification is objected to insofar as only claims for domestic priority should be included in the first sentence of the specification. Foreign priority claims are made either within the oath or declaration or in an application data sheet.

Appropriate correction is required.

Drawings

2. The drawings are objected to under 37 CFR 1.83(a). The drawings must show every feature of the invention specified in the claims. Therefore, the slot which terminates short of the mid way point between the edges as defined in claim 1, lines 5 and 6, and claim 9, line 6 must be shown or the feature(s) canceled from the claim(s). No new matter should be entered.

Corrected drawing sheets in compliance with 37 CFR 1.121(d) are required in reply to the Office action to avoid abandonment of the application. Any amended replacement drawing sheet should include all of the figures appearing on the immediate prior version of the sheet, even if only one figure is being amended. The figure or figure number of an amended drawing should not be labeled as "amended." If a drawing figure is to be canceled, the appropriate figure must be removed from the replacement sheet, and where necessary, the remaining figures must be renumbered and appropriate changes made to the brief description of the several views of the drawings for consistency. Additional replacement sheets may be necessary to show the renumbering of the remaining figures. The replacement sheet(s) should be labeled "Replacement Sheet" in the page header (as per 37 CFR 1.84(c)) so as not to obstruct any portion of the

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drawing figures. If the changes are not accepted by the examiner, the applicant will be notified and informed of any required corrective action in the next Office action. The objection to the drawings will not be held in abeyance.

Specification

3. The specification is objected to as failing to provide proper antecedent basis for the claimed subject matter. See 37 CFR 1.75(d)(1) and MPEP § 608.01(o). Correction of the following is required: no description can be found in the specification or drawings of a slot which terminates short of the mid way point between the edges of each partition strip. As set forth on page 3, lines 16 and 17 of the specification, "The slots end mid-way between the upper and lower edges.". This coincides with drawing figure 3 which shows the upper and lower edges aligned when the strips are engaged, i.e. the slots must necessarily extend to the mid way point for the upper and lower edges to be aligned when engaged. If the slots did not extend to the mid way point, the edges would not be aligned.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

4. Claims 1-16 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

In claim 1, lines 5 and 6, and claim 9, line 6, it is unclear how the slots in the disclosed strips terminate short of the mid way point between the edges.

In claim 2, line 2, claim 9, lines 10 and 11 and claim 10, line 2, "each slot in said longitudinally extending strip", "each said slot in said intermediate portion" and "each slot in said longitudinally extending strip" are each unclear insofar as only one slot was previously

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positively set forth in the claims, i.e. "each slot" or "each said slot" implies that more than one was previously claimed. It is suggested that ---at least one--- or ---said at least one--- be substituted for "each" in each phrase.

In claim 2, line 3 and claim 10, line 3, "a transversely extending strip" is a double inclusion of an element insofar as the strips were previously set forth in the claims, i.e. the element is being reintroduced into the claims.

In each of claims 3-8 and 11-16, "the slot" is unclear insofar as a plurality of slots were previously defined in the claims, i.e. which of the plurality is being referred to?

Allowable Subject Matter

5. Claims 1-16 would be allowable if rewritten or amended to overcome the rejection(s) under 35 U.S.C. 112, 2nd paragraph, set forth in this Office action.

Conclusion

The cited prior art is illustrative of the general state of the art.

In order to reduce pendency and avoid potential delays, Technology Center 3700 is encouraging FAXing of responses in Office Actions to (703)872-9306. This practice may be used for filing papers not requiring a fee. It may also be used for filing papers which require a fee by Applicants who authorize charges to a PTO deposit account. Please identify the Examiner and art unit at the top of your cover sheet.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR

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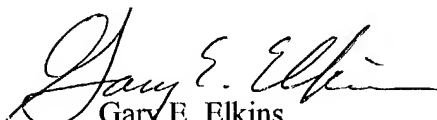
system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions regarding access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

If in receiving this Office Action, it is apparent that certain documents are missing, e.g. copies of references cited, form PTO-892, etc., requests for copies of such papers should be directed to Errica Bembry at (703)306-4005.

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the receptionist at (703)308-1078.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communication from the Examiner should be directed to Gary Elkins at telephone number (703)308-1034. The Examiner can normally be reached Monday through Thursday.

If attempts to reach the Examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the Examiner's supervisor, Mr. Lee Young can be reached at (703)308-2572.


Gary E. Elkins
Primary Examiner
Art Unit 3727

gee
30 September 2004